MARVEL
42
STAR WARS
DARTH VADER
PAK
GORHAM
BLEE
RISE OF THE SCHISM IMPERIAL!

RISE OF THE SCHISM IMPERIAL

After facing a series of tests by Emperor Palpatine and Grand Vizier Mas Amedda during the scourge of the droids, Darth Vader eventually used the corrupted droids to his advantage, taking out the onslaughts of troopers sent after him.

Now a new threat to the Empire is rising from within, and they've got their eyes on Vader....

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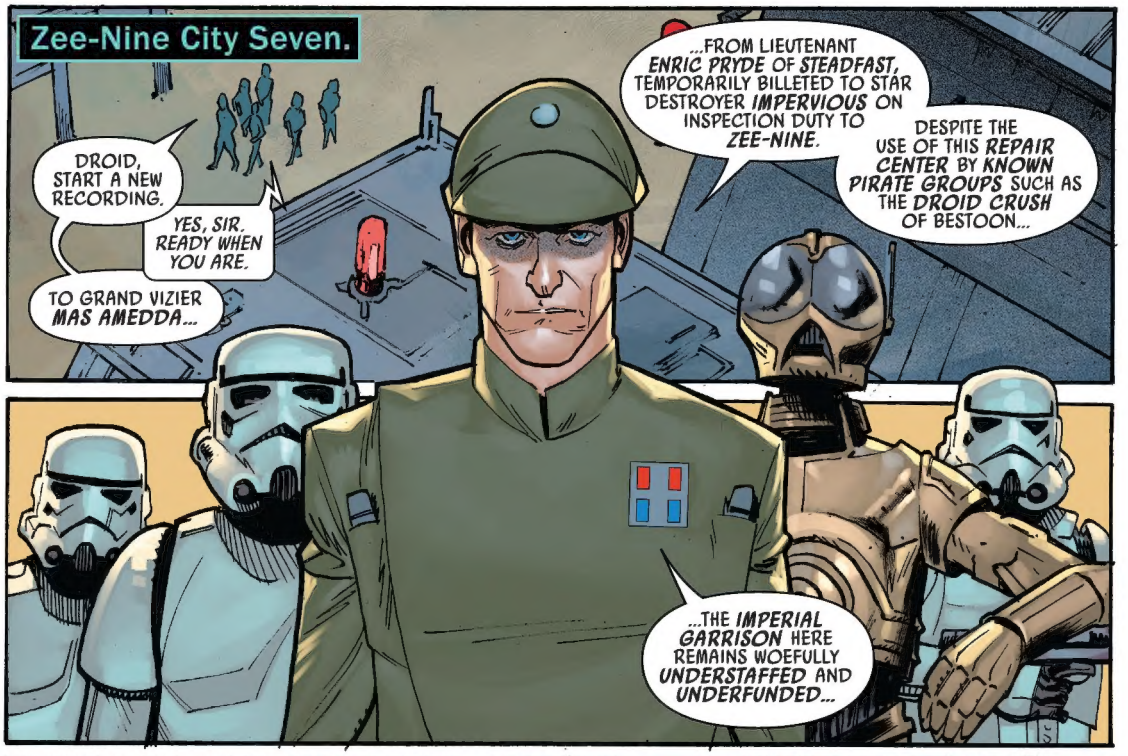
Imperial Palace.
Coruscant.
UGH.
GRAND VIZIER?
AH! SUB-ADMINISTRATOR MOORE!
YOU LOOK PALE. ARE YOU UNWELL?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
OH, MY APOLOGIES.
YOUR EMINENCE!
I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR THE INTERRUPTION...
...BUT I BELIEVE MAS AMEDDA HAS SOME KIND OF REPORT FOR YOU.
I'LL TELL THE EMPEROR THAT YOU ARE HERE, THEN.
AH! NO NEED! I'LL--
AH YES...
...I SENSED HIS FEAR FROM A KILOMETER AWAY.

WHAT NEW FAILURE HAVE YOU TO REPORT, GRAND VIZIER?
I...I CAN TELL YOU THE DROID THREAT HAS BEEN DESTROYED...*
BUT...?
*IN DARK DROIDS #5.
...BUT WE HAVE REPORTS THAT LORD VADER WAS TEMPORARILY ABLE TO INFECT AND CONTROL DROIDS OF HIS OWN.
WE BELIEVE HE'S LOST THOSE ABILITIES, BUT HE SEEKS MORE POWER EVERY DAY--
REALLY? YOU MEAN...
SKKTT
BRRRRZZZZZZZT
GAAAH!
...LORD VADER, WHO WAS SO WEAK WHEN I SENT YOU AFTER HIM, GROWS EVEN STRONGER?
Y-YES, YOUR EMINENCE.
YOU'RE ENJOYING THIS, AREN'T YOU, SUB-ADMINISTRATOR MOORE?
YES, YOUR EMINENCE.
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD DO BETTER IN THIS MATTER THAN THE VIZIER?
YES, YOUR EMINENCE.


Zee-Nine City Seven.
DROID, START A NEW RECORDING.
YES, SIR. READY WHEN YOU ARE.
TO GRAND VIZIER MAS AMEDDA...
...FROM LIEUTENANT ENRIC PRYDE OF STEADFAST, TEMPORARILY BILLETED TO STAR DESTROYER IMPERVIOUS ON INSPECTION DUTY TO ZEE-NINE.
DESPITE THE USE OF THIS REPAIR CENTER BY KNOWN PIRATE GROUPS SUCH AS THE DROID CRUSH OF BESTOON...
...THE IMPERIAL GARRISON HERE REMAINS WOEFULLY UNDERSTAFFED AND UNDERFUNDED...

...AND THUS A PRIME TARGET FOR REBELS.
SINCE MY LAST REPORT, I HAVE DISCOVERED THREE MORE SECURITY BREACHES AND CAPTURED A DOZEN MORE INSURGENTS.
ONCE AGAIN, I URGENTLY REQUEST DEPLOYMENT OF THE TROOPS AND SUPPLIES OUTLINED IN MY--

FRAKOOM
FRAKOOOM
GAH!
FRAKOOOM

FRAKOOM
FRAKOOOM
FRAKOOOM
CONTACT THE IMPERVIOUS!
TELL THEM WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!
I AM ATTEMPTING TO CONNECT, SIR...

...BUT I DON'T BELIEVE THEY'LL BE ANSWERING.
NO...
YAAAAAAAAA!
KRAKOOOOM
NOOOO!

DON'T JUST STAND THERE GAWPING!
FORM A PERIMETER!
THE REBELS WILL BE COMING FOR US!
AND WE APPARENTLY CAN'T EXPECT ANY SUPPORT FROM OUR SUPERIORS.
SO GET READY!
BECAUSE WE'RE ON OUR OWN!
THAT'S RIGHT, PRYDE! YOUR STINKING EMPIRE HAS ABANDONED YOU!
AND NOW YOU'RE GONNA DIE!
YOU KNOW, WE WERE ONLY KEEPING YOU ALIVE IN CASE YOU HAD INFORMATION ABOUT THE REBEL ATTACK PLANS.
I GUESS THERE'S NO NEED FOR THAT ANY LONGER.
STOP RIGHT THERE, IMPERIAL SCUM!

STEP AWAY FROM THOSE PRISONERS AND DROP YOUR WEAPONS!
OR YOU'RE ALL DEAD!
HM.
YOU DROP YOUR WEAPONS, OR THESE PRISONERS ARE DEAD!
...
FINE.
SKLAAAANG
HA! YOU REBELS. SO NOBLE!
FIRE!
BRRZAAM
BRZZAAAM
BRRRZZZZZAAAM
IT'S NOT SO MUCH THAT WE'RE NOBLE...

...IT'S JUST A LOT MORE FUN THIS WAY.
I MEAN, IF YOU'RE MACHINE-AUGMENTED REBELS, YOU WANNA USE THOSE AUGMENTATIONS, DON'TCHA?
GRRAAA!
HA HA HA!
MAKE WAY FOR THE M.A.R. CORPS!

Twelve hours later.
LIEUTENANT PRYDE?
WH- WHO--?
LORD VADER!
IT'S-- IT'S A TRAP!
WELL, OF COURSE IT IS. NOW, HOW MANY ARE THERE?
AT LEAST A HUNDRED REBEL FOOT SOLDIERS.
NO, HOW MANY CYBORGS?
FOUR.
ARE THEY... FORMIDABLE?

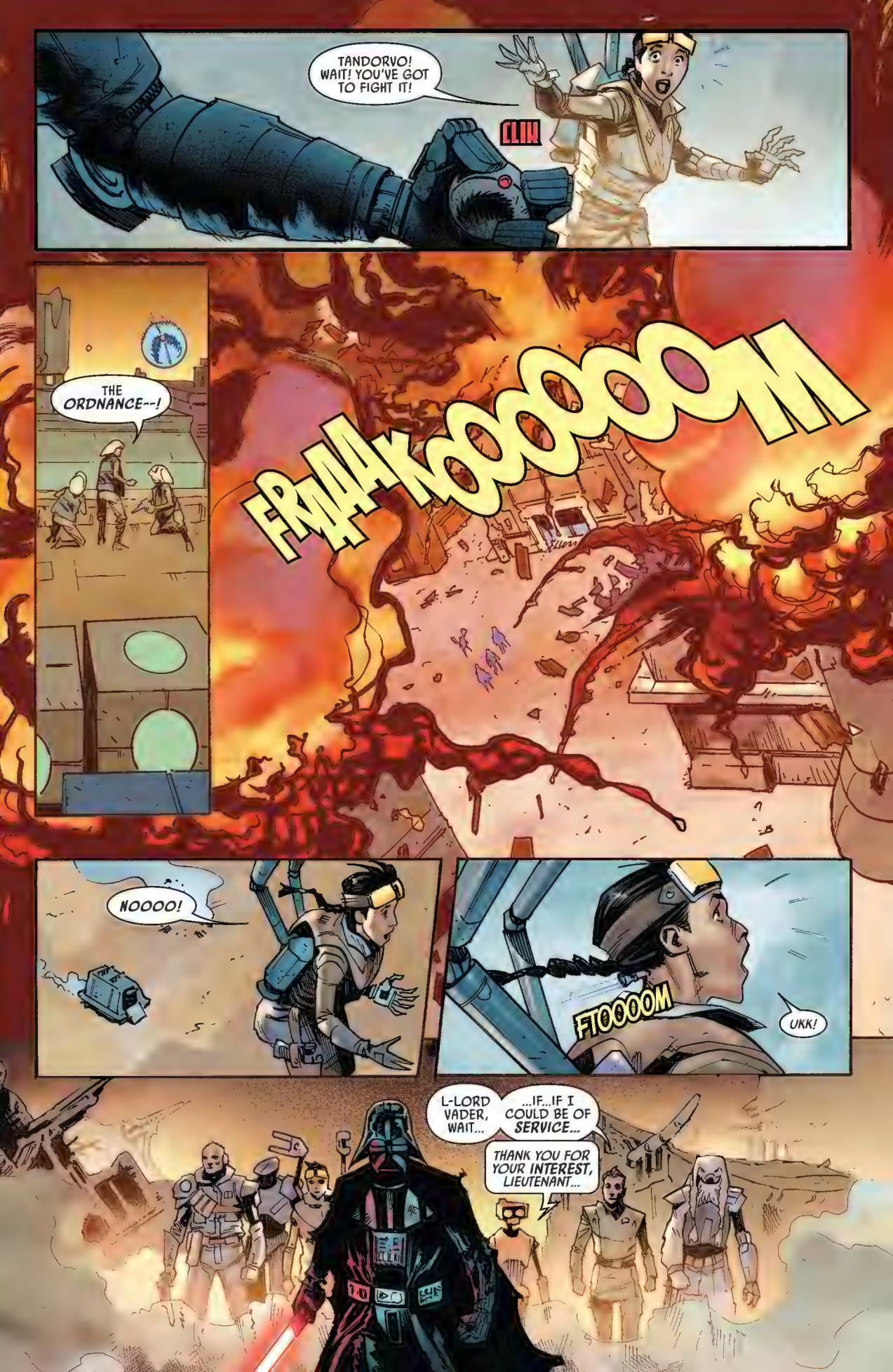
I'VE... I'VE NEVER SEEN MORE DEADLY SOLDIERS.
GOOD.
ZZZZZZ
SKLAAAAANG
GAH!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE, LIEUTENANT PRYDE.
I RECOMMEND YOU EVACUATE WHILE YOU CAN.
WAIT...LORD VADER!
I'M SERIOUS!
IT'S A TRAP!
YES, IT IS.

BRZZAM
BRZZAAM
GAH!
BRZZAAAANG
SKLAAAANG
SHNZZAAAN
UKK!
BRRZZAAM
KTOOOM
BRAAOOW
SKTAAAANG
SKR
BOOM
LORD VADER!

THIS WAY, MY LORD!
DO NOT INTERFERE...
GAH!
...WITH WHAT YOU FAIL TO COMPREHEND.
EEE!
WHA--?
CLICK
FTOOP
SKTTTTKT
GAH!

HNNH!
AAAH!
GRRAAAA!
M.A.R. CORPS, WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WE'RE PERFECTLY FINE, COMMANDER...
...JUST UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.
THE PROCESSORS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY IMPLANTED, LORD VADER.
THESE UNITS ARE NOW CONTROLLED BY IMPERIAL DROID BRAINS.
YOU HAVE YOUR ORDERS.
BY YOUR COMMAND.
SONOFA...

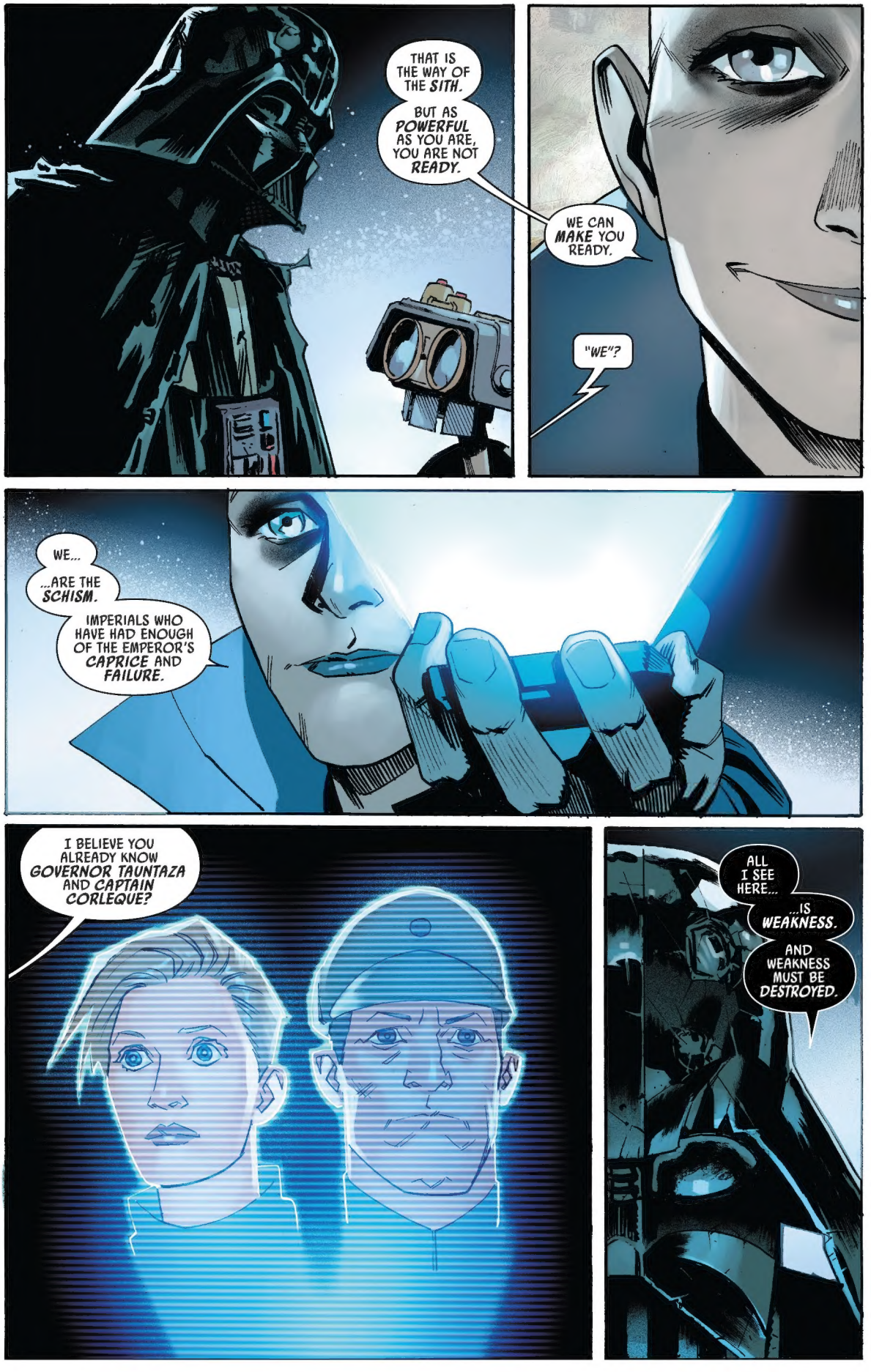
BRRRZAAAM
BRZZAM
THEY'VE TURNED!
BRRZAAM
OPEN FIRE--
UKK!
BRRZZAAM
BRZZZAAM
IS THIS YOUR BEST?
JUST A MOMENT, LORD VADER...
...I'M ACCESSING THIS UNIT'S MEMORY BANKS.
IT'S STILL RESISTING A BIT.
AH. THERE IT IS.
THESE ARE THE PRIMARY ORDNANCE CACHES OF THE REBELS CURRENTLY ATTACKING US.
ALL WE NEED TO DO IS--
SKRRAAKOOM
GAH!
TANDORVO! CHAMDAKA! BLADES!
THEY--THEY IMPLANTED US WITH SOMETHING!


TANDORVO! WAIT! YOU'VE GOT TO FIGHT IT!
CLIK
THE ORDNANCE--!
FRAKKOOOOOOM
NOOOO!
FTOOOOM
UKK!
L-LORD VADER, WAIT...
...IF...IF I COULD BE OF SERVICE...
THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST, LIEUTENANT...

Mustafar.
"...BUT YOU ARE ENTIRELY UNEQUIPPED FOR WHAT COMES NEXT."
NOW THIS IS COMING ALONG NICELY, ISN'T IT?
VZZZT
HNN...
AAAGH!
DDZZZZT
BZZZTT
GRAAAAAA!
HNN!
EH?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, LORD VADER?
I CAN FEEL THEM... ...FIGHTING IT.
AH YES. IDEALLY, WE'D JUST ELIMINATE THEIR ORGANIC BRAINS.
BUT THEIR VALUE AS SOLDIERS DEPENDS ON THE TRAINING AND SKILLS EMBEDDED IN THEIR NERVOUS SYSTEMS.
BUT WITH THEIR FULL ARMOR IN PLACE, THE IMPLANTED DROID BRAINS SHOULD NOT LOSE CONTROL AGAIN.
IF THE AGONY OF THEIR ORGANIC PARTS IS TOO TROUBLING, WE COULD EXPERIMENT WITH SOME KIND OF ANALGESIC--
SILENCE, DROID.
WE HAVE... ...A VISITOR.

SUB-ADMINISTRATOR MOORE.
ADMINISTRATOR MOORE.
AH. THE EMPEROR FAVORS YOU ONCE MORE.
LORD VADER HUMILIATED THE GRAND VIZIER. NOW IT IS MY TIME TO SHINE.
THE EMPEROR SENT ME TO ASSIST YOU.
TO SPY ON ME.
OF COURSE.
WE WERE TOLD YOU WERE BUILDING YOUR STRENGTH.
BUT YOU SEEM...
...TROUBLED.
ARE YOU NOT HAPPY WITH YOUR PROGRESS?
THIS...
...GAME...
...WILL NOT GO WELL FOR YOU, ADMINISTRATOR.
OH, I'M TOO SMALL FOR GAMES, LORD VADER.
THE ONLY WAY THROUGH ALL OF THIS FOR ME IS THE TRUTH.
YOU MUST DESTROY YOUR MASTER OR BE DESTROYED, YES?


THAT IS THE WAY OF THE SITH.
BUT AS POWERFUL AS YOU ARE, YOU ARE NOT READY.
WE CAN MAKE YOU READY.
"WE"?
WE...
...ARE THE SCHISM.
IMPERIALS WHO HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THE EMPEROR'S CAPRICE AND FAILURE.
I BELIEVE YOU ALREADY KNOW GOVERNOR TAUNTAZA AND CAPTAIN CORLEQUE?
ALL I SEE HERE...
...IS WEAKNESS.
AND WEAKNESS MUST BE DESTROYED.

YOU ARE INDEED A SITH, OBSESSED WITH PERSONAL POWER ABOVE ALL ELSE.
THAT'S HOW CRIMSON DAWN GOT CLOSER THAN THEY EVER SHOULD HAVE.
THAT'S HOW I'M WHERE I AM RIGHT NOW, CHANGING EVERYTHING EVEN AS WE SPEAK.

YOU THINK WE'RE JUST A FEW COGS IN THE MACHINE.
AND YOU'RE NOT WRONG.
I COULD SHOW YOU MORE OF OUR MEMBERS. BUT THERE'S NO ONE OF NOTE.
NO MOFFS. NO CYBORGS. NO FORCE WIELDERS.
JUST A HANDFUL OF THE MILLIONS OF FORGETTABLE TOOLS OF THE EMPIRE.

BUT UNDER THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES, NO ONE IN THE GALAXY IS MORE POWERFUL THAN A MINOR BUREAUCRAT IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
AND IF THE GREAT LORD VADER CAN DEIGN TO JUST LOOK DOWN AND SAY...
...YES...
...ALL THAT POWER CAN BE YOURS.
To be continued....

NEXT

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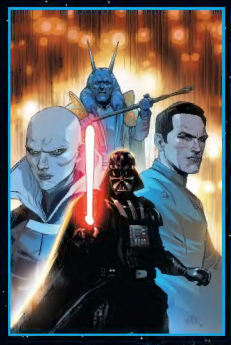
THE SAGA ALSO CONTINUES IN...

STAR WARS 42



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